

Establishing a Safe Connection for Congregations

1. Education! For everybody----laity, clergy, church leaders, community. Ask your synod and / or the ELCA for help.
2. Clarify expectations: "zero tolerance policy" of sexual contact between pastor and parishioners.
3. Prepare a policy and a plan for responding to complaints.
4. Skip the "laundry list of don'ts," and establish a climate of openness, trust, awareness, carefulness, and respect.
5. Encourage your pastor to take care of personal needs away and apart from the congregation
6. Make sure your pastor is taking appropriate time off.
7. Provide adequate vacation time for pastors.
8. Provide appropriate time and funds for continuing education for your pastor.
9. Provide adequate and fair compensation for pastors.
10. Discourage your pastor from being a lone ranger. Encourage accountability, appropriate supervision and collegiality. Be alert to isolation.
11. Clarify expectations of single pastors and make them known widely.
12. Encourage your pastor to "*get a life!*" Promote healthiness and wholeness.
13. Honor and respect the pastor's family commitments and family life.
14. Help establish and respect healthy boundaries throughout the congregation.
15. Be clear about job descriptions, policies, schedules, and other guidelines for pastors, lay leaders, pastoral relationships, and lay volunteers.

Adapted from Safe Connections by Rev. Jan Erickson-Pearson 1996.

Aftercare Needs for the Victims of Our Churches

Revised 1/2011

"I just want to know that the church still cares"

No news isn't always good news...

Adult and teen victim issues:

1. Possible previous victimization
2. Believe; trust the pastor – "What is said must be okay."
3. Often alone with pastor
4. May have fantasized about the pastor

Victim dynamics:

1. Trusting
2. Emotionally in need – support
3. Self-esteem compromised
4. Attracted to the pastor
5. Easily flattered
6. Accustomed to blurred boundaries

Lasting effects:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Feeling betrayed | 6. Rejection |
| 2. Anger | 7. Physical problems |
| 3. Fear | 8. Psychological problems PTSD |
| 4. Shame | 9. Spirituality issues |
| 5. Guilt | |

Continued Care:

Getting power back can mean the difference between victim and survivor.
The church was a place to be safe. Many came because they didn't feel safe in other situations.

They like to know the church is there for them.

They want people to hear their stories.

They are angry that the abuser can resign and it's over.

They are angry that they are blamed.

They are angry because they aren't welcome in the church.

They are angry that their family members are left out.

What congregations and synods can do:

1. Someone in the synod should have synod victims as part of the portfolio. If victim is very needy, I'll be glad to help.
2. Have a quarterly check-up conversation, "How is it going? Are you comfortable in your church? How is everything with your family?"
3. Are there counseling needs? Do you want to talk with the ELCA consultant?
4. Work with aftercare churches on victim issues. Start with interim pastor, church councils, adult education leaders, and task force members.

5. Try to develop a synod taskforce. Think about people in synod who have good skills with victim issues. Work on: Power of office, victim blaming, safe church work shop, and victims' spiritual needs.
6. Work with families of child victims; counseling, supportive conversations. When possible and legal, answer questions about the abuser. Where he is and what he/she needs to do.
7. Be aware of possible future disclosures: Your presence and openness will allow others to deal with victim issues.